

DOCTOR SLEEP

By Stephen King and published by Hodder & Stoughton

FICTION:

Carrie
'Salem's Lot
The Shining
Night Shift
The Stand
The Dead Zone
Firestarter
Cujo
Different Seasons
Cycle of the Werewolf
Christine
Pet Sematary
IT
Skeleton Crew
The Eyes of the Dragon
Misery
The Tommyknockers
The Dark Half
Four Past Midnight
Needful Things
Gerald's Game
Dolores Claiborne
Nightmares and Dreamscapes
Insomnia
Rose Madder
Desperation
Bag of Bones
The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon
Hearts in Atlantis
Dreamcatcher
Everything's Eventual
From a Buick 8
Cell
Lisey's Story
Duma Key
Just After Sunset
Stephen King Goes to the Movies
Under the Dome
Blockade Billy
Full Dark, No Stars
11.22.63
The Dark Tower I: The Gunslinger
The Dark Tower II: The Drawing of the Three
The Dark Tower III: The Waste Lands
The Dark Tower IV: Wizard and Glass
The Dark Tower V: Wolves of the Calla
The Dark Tower VI: Song of Susannah
The Dark Tower VII: The Dark Tower
The Wind through the Keyhole: A Dark Tower Novel

By Stephen King as Richard Bachman

Thinner
The Running Man
The Bachman Books
The Regulators
Blaze

NON-FICTION:

Danse Macabre
On Writing (A Memoir of the Craft)

STEPHEN
KING
DOCTOR
SLEEP

A NOVEL


HODDER &
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When I was playing my primitive brand of rhythm guitar with a group called the Rock Bottom Remainers, Warren Zevon used to gig with us. Warren loved gray t-shirts and movies like *Kingdom of the Spiders*. He insisted I sing lead on his signature tune, 'Werewolves of London', during the encore portion of our shows. I said I was not worthy. He insisted that I was. 'Key of G', Warren told me, 'and howl like you mean it. Most important of all, *play like Keith.*'

I'll never be able to play like Keith Richards, but I always did my best, and with Warren beside me, matching me note for note and laughing his fool head off, I always had a blast.

Warren, this howl is for you, wherever you are. I miss you, buddy.

We stood at the turning point. Half-measures availed us nothing.

– The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous

If we were to live, we had to be free of anger. [It is] the dubious luxury of normal men and women.

– The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous

DOCTOR SLEEP

PREFATORY MATTERS

FEAR stands for fuck everything and run.

– Old AA saying

LOCKBOX

1

On the second day of December in a year when a Georgia peanut farmer was doing business in the White House, one of Colorado's great resort hotels burned to the ground. The Overlook was declared a total loss. After an investigation, the fire marshal of Jicarilla County ruled the cause had been a defective boiler. The hotel was closed for the winter when the accident occurred, and only four people were present. Three survived. The hotel's off-season caretaker, John Torrance, was killed during an unsuccessful (and heroic) effort to dump the boiler's steam pressure, which had mounted to disastrously high levels due to an inoperative relief valve.

Two of the survivors were the caretaker's wife and young son. The third was the Overlook's chef, Richard Hallorann, who had left his seasonal job in Florida and come to check on the Torrances because of what he called 'a powerful hunch' that the family was in trouble. Both surviving adults were quite badly injured in the explosion. Only the child was unhurt.

Physically, at least.

2

Wendy Torrance and her son received a settlement from the corporation that owned the Overlook. It wasn't huge, but enough to get them by for the three years she was unable to work because of back injuries. A lawyer she consulted told her that if she were willing to hold out and play tough, she might get a great deal more, because the corporation was anxious to avoid a court case. But she, like the corporation, wanted only to put that disastrous winter in Colorado behind her. She would convalesce, she said, and she did, although back injuries plagued her until the end of

her life. Shattered vertebrae and broken ribs heal, but they never cease crying out.

Winifred and Daniel Torrance lived in the mid-South for a while, then drifted down to Tampa. Sometimes Dick Hallorann (he of the powerful hunches) came up from Key West to visit with them. To visit with young Danny especially. They shared a bond.

One early morning in March of 1981, Wendy called Dick and asked if he could come. Danny, she said, had awakened her in the night and told her not to go in the bathroom.

After that, he refused to talk at all.

3

He woke up needing to pee. Outside, a strong wind was blowing. It was warm – in Florida it almost always was – but he did not like that sound, and supposed he never would. It reminded him of the Overlook, where the defective boiler had been the very least of the dangers.

He and his mother lived in a cramped second-floor tenement apartment. Danny left the little room next to his mother's and crossed the hall. The wind gusted and a dying palm tree beside the building clattered its leaves. The sound was skeletal. They always left the bathroom door open when no one was using the shower or the toilet, because the lock was broken. Tonight the door was closed. Not because his mother was in there, however. Thanks to facial injuries she'd suffered at the Overlook, she now snored – a soft *queep-queep* sound – and he could hear it coming from her bedroom.

Well, she closed it by accident, that's all.

He knew better, even then (he was possessed of powerful hunches and intuitions himself), but sometimes you had to know. Sometimes you had to *see*. This was something he had found out at the Overlook, in a room on the second floor.

Reaching with an arm that seemed too long, too stretchy, too *boneless*, he turned the knob and opened the door.

The woman from Room 217 was there, as he had known she would be. She was sitting naked on the toilet with her legs spread and her pallid thighs bulging. Her greenish breasts hung down like deflated balloons. The patch of hair below her stomach was gray.

Her eyes were also gray, like steel mirrors. She saw him, and her lips stretched back in a grin.

Close your eyes, Dick Hallorann had told him once upon a time. *If you see something bad, close your eyes and tell yourself it's not there and when you open them again, it will be gone.*

But it hadn't worked in Room 217 when he was five, and it wouldn't work now. He knew it. He could *smell* her. She was decaying.

The woman – he knew her name, it was Mrs Massey – lumbered to her purple feet, holding out her hands to him. The flesh on her arms hung down, almost dripping. She was smiling the way you do when you see an old friend. Or, perhaps, something good to eat.

With an expression that could have been mistaken for calmness, Danny closed the door softly and stepped back. He watched as the knob turned right . . . left . . . right again . . . then stilled.

He was eight now, and capable of at least some rational thought even in his horror. Partly because, in a deep part of his mind, he had been expecting this. Although he had always thought it would be Horace Derwent who would eventually show up. Or perhaps the bartender, the one his father had called Lloyd. He supposed he should have known it would be Mrs Massey, though, even before it finally happened. Because of all the undead things in the Overlook, she had been the worst.

The rational part of his mind told him she was just a fragment of unremembered bad dream that had followed him out of sleep and across the hall to the bathroom. That part insisted that if he opened the door again, there would be nothing there. Surely there wouldn't be, now that he was awake. But another part of him, a part that *shone*, knew better. The Overlook wasn't done with him. At least one of its vengeful spirits had followed him all the way to Florida. Once he had come upon that woman sprawled in a bathtub. She had gotten out and tried to choke him with her fishy (but terribly strong) fingers. If he opened the bathroom door now, she would finish the job.

He compromised by putting his ear against the door. At first there was nothing. Then he heard a faint sound.

Dead fingernails scratching on wood.

Danny walked into the kitchen on not-there legs, stood on a chair, and peed into the sink. Then he woke his mother and told her not to go into the bathroom because there was a bad thing there. Once that was done, he went back to bed and sank deep beneath the covers. He wanted to stay there forever, only getting up to pee in the sink. Now that he had warned his mother, he had no interest in talking to her.

His mother knew about the no-talking thing. It had happened after Danny had ventured into Room 217 at the Overlook.

‘Will you talk to Dick?’

Lying in his bed, looking up at her, he nodded. His mother called, even though it was four in the morning.

Late the next day, Dick came. He brought something with him. A present.

4

After Wendy called Dick – she made sure Danny heard her doing it – Danny went back to sleep. Although he was now eight and in the third grade, he was sucking his thumb. It hurt her to see him do that. She went to the bathroom door and stood looking at it. She was afraid – Danny had made her afraid – but she had to go, and she had no intention of using the sink as he had. The image of how she would look, teetering on the edge of the counter with her butt hanging over the porcelain (even if there was no one there to see), made her wrinkle her nose.

In one hand she had the hammer from her little box of widow’s tools. As she turned the knob and pushed the bathroom door open, she raised it. The bathroom was empty, of course, but the ring of the toilet seat was down. She never left it that way before going to bed, because she knew if Danny wandered in, only ten percent awake, he was apt to forget to put it up and piss all over it. Also, there was a smell. A bad one. As if a rat had died in the walls.

She took a step in, then two. She saw movement and whirled, hammer upraised, to hit whoever

(whatever)

was hiding behind the door. But it was only her shadow. Scared

of her own shadow, people sometimes sneered, but who had a better right than Wendy Torrance? After the things she had seen and been through, she knew that shadows could be dangerous. They could have teeth.

No one was in the bathroom, but there was a discolored smear on the toilet seat and another on the shower curtain. Excrement was her first thought, but shit wasn't yellowish-purple. She looked more closely and saw bits of flesh and decayed skin. There was more on the bathmat, in the shape of footprints. She thought them too small – too *dainty* – to be a man's.

'Oh God,' she whispered.

She ended up using the sink after all.

5

Wendy nagged her son out of bed at noon. She managed to get a little soup and half a peanut butter sandwich into him, but then he went back to bed. He still wouldn't speak. Hallorann arrived shortly after five in the afternoon, behind the wheel of his now ancient (but perfectly maintained and blindingly polished) red Cadillac. Wendy had been standing at the window, waiting and watching as she had once waited and watched for her husband, hoping Jack would come home in a good mood. And sober.

She rushed down the stairs and opened the door just as Dick was about to ring the bell marked TORRANCE 2A. He held out his arms and she rushed into them at once, wishing she could be enfolded there for at least an hour. Maybe two.

He let go and held her at arm's length by her shoulders. 'You're lookin fine, Wendy. How's the little man? He talkin again?'

'No, but he'll talk to you. Even if he won't do it out loud to start with, you can—' Instead of finishing, she made a finger-gun and pointed it at his forehead.

'Not necessarily,' Dick said. His smile revealed a bright new pair of false teeth. The Overlook had taken most of the last set on the night the boiler blew. Jack Torrance swung the mallet that took Dick's dentures and Wendy's ability to walk without a hitch in her stride, but they both understood it had really been the Overlook.

‘He’s very powerful, Wendy. If he wants to block me out, he will. I know from my own experience. Besides, it’d be better if we talk with our mouths. Better for him. Now tell me everything that happened.’

After she did that, Wendy took him into the bathroom. She had left the stains for him to see, like a beat cop preserving the scene of a crime for the forensic team. And there *had* been a crime. One against her boy.

Dick looked for a long time, not touching, then nodded. ‘Let’s see if Danny’s up and in the doins.’

He wasn’t, but Wendy’s heart was lightened by the look of gladness that came into her son’s face when he saw who was sitting beside him on the bed and shaking his shoulder.

(hey Danny I brought you a present)

(it’s not my birthday)

Wendy watched them, knowing they were speaking but not knowing what it was about.

Dick said, ‘Get on up, honey. We’re gonna take a walk on the beach.’

(Dick she came back Mrs Massey from Room 217 came back)

Dick gave his shoulder another shake. ‘Talk out loud, Dan. You’re scarin your ma.’

Danny said, ‘What’s my present?’

Dick smiled. ‘That’s better. I like to hear you, and Wendy does, too.’

‘Yes.’ It was all she dared say. Otherwise they’d hear the tremble in her voice and be concerned. She didn’t want that.

‘While we’re gone, you might want to give the bathroom a cleaning,’ Dick said to her. ‘Have you got kitchen gloves?’

She nodded.

‘Good. Wear them.’

6

The beach was two miles away. The parking lot was surrounded by tawdry beachfront attractions – funnel cake concessions, hotdog stands, souvenir shops – but this was the tag end of the season, and none were doing much business. They had the beach itself almost

AUTHOR'S NOTE

My first book with Scribner was *Bag of Bones*, in 1998. Anxious to please my new partners, I went out on tour for that novel. At one of the autographing sessions, some guy asked, 'Hey, any idea what happened to the kid from *The Shining*?'

This was a question I'd often asked myself about that old book – along with another: What would have happened to Danny's troubled father if he had found Alcoholics Anonymous instead of trying to get by with what people in AA call 'white-knuckle sobriety'?

As with *Under the Dome* and *11/22/63*, this was an idea that never quite left my mind. Every now and then – while taking a shower, watching a TV show, or making a long turnpike drive – I would find myself calculating Danny Torrance's age, and wondering where he was. Not to mention his mother, one more basically good human being left in Jack Torrance's destructive wake. Wendy and Danny were, in the current parlance, codependents, people bound by ties of love and responsibility to an addicted family member. At some point in 2009, one of my recovering alcoholic friends told me a one-liner that goes like this: 'When a codependent is drowning, somebody else's life flashes before his eyes.' That struck me as too true to be funny, and I think it was at that point that *Doctor Sleep* became inevitable. I had to know.

Did I approach the book with trepidation? You better believe it. *The Shining* is one of those novels people always mention (along with 'Salem's Lot, *Pet Sematary*, and *It*) when they talk about which of my books really scared the bejeezus out of them. Plus, of course, there was Stanley Kubrick's movie, which many seem to remember – for reasons I have never quite understood – as one of the scariest films they have ever seen. (If you have seen the movie but not read the novel, you should note that *Doctor Sleep* follows the latter, which is, in my opinion, the True History of the Torrance Family.)

I like to think I'm still pretty good at what I do, but nothing can live up to the memory of a good scare, and I mean *nothing*, especially if administered to one who is young and impressionable. There has been at least one brilliant sequel to Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (Mick Garris's *Psycho IV*, with Anthony Perkins reprising his role as Norman Bates), but people who've seen that – or any of the others – will only shake their heads and say *no, no, not as good*. They remember the first time they experienced Janet Leigh, and no remake or sequel can top that moment when the curtain is pulled back and the knife starts to do its work.

And people change. The man who wrote *Doctor Sleep* is very different from the well-meaning alcoholic who wrote *The Shining*, but both remain interested in the same thing: telling a kickass story. I enjoyed finding Danny Torrance again and following his adventures. I hope you did, too. If that's the case, Constant Reader, we're all good.

Before letting you go, let me thank the people who need to be thanked, okay?

Nan Graham edited the book. *Righteously*. Thanks, Nan.

Chuck Verrill, my agent, sold the book. That's important, but he also took all my phone calls and fed me spoonfuls of soothing syrup. Those things are indispensable.

Russ Dorr did the research, but for what's wrong, blame me for misunderstanding. He's a great physician's assistant and a Nordic monster of inspiration and good cheer.

Chris Lotts supplied Italian when Italian was needed. Yo, Chris.

Rocky Wood was my go-to guy for all things *Shining*, providing me with names and dates I had either forgotten or plain got wrong. He also provided reams of info on every recreational vehicle and camper under the sun (the coolest was Rose's EarthCruiser). The Rock knows my work better than I do myself. Look him up on the Web sometime. He's got it going on.

My son Owen read the book and suggested valuable changes. Chief among them was his insistence that we see Dan reach what recovered alcoholics call 'the bottom'.

My wife also read *Doctor Sleep* and helped to make it better. I love you, Tabitha.

Thanks to you guys and girls who read my stuff, too. May you have long days and pleasant nights.

Let me close with a word of caution: when you're on the turnpikes and freeways of America, watch out for those Winnebagos and Bounders.

You never know who might be inside. Or *what*.

Bangor, Maine

STEPHEN KING

THE SHINING

‘Obviously a masterpiece, probably the best supernatural novel in a hundred years’ – Peter Straub

Danny is only five years old but in the words of old Mr Hallorann he is a ‘shiner’, aglow with psychic voltage. When his father becomes caretaker of the Overlook Hotel, Danny’s visions grow out of control.

As winter closes in and blizzards cut them off, the hotel seems to develop a life of its own. It is meant to be empty. So who is the lady in Room 217 and who are the masked guests going up and down in the elevator? And why do the hedges shaped like animals seem so alive?

Somewhere, somehow, there is an evil force in the hotel – and that too is beginning to shine . . .

‘King’s imagination is vast . . . one of the great storytellers of our time’ – *Guardian*


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